

# CHILD SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

The following represent the minimal acceptable standards for the supervision of children. These guidelines were developed by social work professionals in collaboration with the community. Remember, these are only guidelines and there may be situations within these guidelines when it is not safe to leave a child unsupervised. Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child's safety.

## Whenever any child is unsupervised/unattended, the following should apply:



- There must be no emotional, medical, or behavioral problems which affect judgement or decision making skills.
- The child must be comfortable being alone.
- Youth must have a safety plan worked out with the parent/caretaker, which includes:
  1. How to access a parent or other responsible adult at all times (including knowing the parent/caretaker's whereabouts and having a telephone number where the parent can be reached).
  2. What to do in case of an emergency.
  3. Guidelines for acceptable behavior.
  4. Knowledge of emergency telephone numbers.
- Youth must demonstrate the ability to follow the safety plan and to make decisions that reflect concern for personal safety.

## Supervision Guidelines:

### 7 years and under:

Should not be left alone for any period of time. This may include leaving children unattended in cars, playgrounds and back yards. The determining consideration is the dangers in the environment and the ability of the caretaker to intervene.

### 8 to 10 years:

Should not be left alone for more than 1 ½ hours and only during daylight and early evening hours.

### 11 to 12 years:

May be left alone for up to 3 hours, but not late at night or in circumstances requiring inappropriate responsibility.

### 13 to 15 years:

May be left unsupervised, but not overnight.

### 16 to 17 years:

May be left unsupervised for up to two consecutive overnight periods.



**Fairfax County Child Protective Services Hotline**  
**703-324-7400 • TTY 703-222-9452**  
**For information on child care resources, call 703-449-9555**

